



ATTACHMENT U5

State of Vermont
Agency of Human Services
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Hal Cohen, Secretary

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May 12, 2015

To whom it may concern,

This is a letter of support on behalf of the Agency of Human Services (AHS) - State of VT, in regards to the Windham County Sheriff's Office proposed concept of constructing and operating a multi-disciplinary criminal justice support center.

The Agency of Human Services (AHS) has the widest reach in state government and a critical mission: to improve the conditions and well-being of Vermonters and protect those who cannot protect themselves.

AHS recognizes there is a need in Vermont to reduce the number of people incarcerated in the state's correctional system. Furthermore there is a need to address the increasing number of individuals with mental illness in jail. We also recognize there is an obligation to properly prepare and support those who are transitioning from jail or prison back to the community in a safe and comprehensive manner. AHS is extremely interested in exploring how Sheriff Clark's concept of an integrated support center could potentially address these issues as well as support the community, courts, state and federal partners and social service agencies in the region.

The Windham County Sheriff's Office and Sheriff Keith Clark have a proven track record of innovation to address criminal justice and the confluence with mental health system needs in Vermont. Sheriff Clark was instrumental in the development of the police social worker program in southern Vermont. The WCSO was the first sheriff's office in Vermont to transport persons in need of mental health treatment without using restraints. Sheriff Clark is currently spearheading an electronic monitoring pilot program to reduce the detained population in Vermont's correctional system.

We look forward to working with Sheriff Clark on this exciting and innovative approach to address critical criminal justice needs in Windham County and the State.

Sincerely,

Hal Cohen
Secretary
Agency of Human Services - State of VT